How to Brew Every Type of Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to brew every type of tea, in summary:** Every tea obeys three dials, temperature, time and leaf, and the type just sets where they sit. The per-type table plus the one rule under all of them.

Each tea type wants a different brew; this is the one-page clear reference. This sits in the mega guide cluster beside the ultimate guide to making tea.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

Brewing every type, at a glance

Type	The rule
Black	Boiling water, ~3-4 min, takes milk
Green	~70-80C never boiling, short steep, re-steep
White	~80-85C, more leaf, longer gentle steep
Oolong	~85-95C by style, lots of leaf, many short steeps
Pu-erh/dark	Rinse first, full boil, many short infusions
Herbal/fruit	Full boil, long steep, cover the cup, no bitterness penalty

The one rule: three dials

Every tea obeys the same three dials, temperature, time and leaf quantity, and the type just sets where they sit. Temperature is the master dial. Delicate, less oxidised teas (green, white, yellow, light oolong) turn bitter in boiling water and want it well off the boil; sturdy and herbal material (black, dark, pu erh after a rinse, rooibos, peppermint, chamomile) needs a full rolling boil to give up its flavour, see ideal water temperatures. Time is the second dial and interacts with the first: the cooler the water, the shorter the steep, and the commonest error of all is steeping a delicate tea both too hot and too long, two mistakes compounding. Leaf quantity is the third and most underused: strength should come from using enough leaf, not from extending the steep, because a long steep keeps pulling astringency after the good compounds have peaked. Walk the families in that light and the table is just the settings, full boil and a few minutes for black, off-boil and short for green, a touch warmer than green for white, by-style for oolong, rinse-then-short-infusions for pu-erh, full boil and a long covered steep for herbals, see green and oolong.

Reading faults back to a dial

The real value of the three-dial model is diagnostic: when a cup is wrong, the model tells you which dial to move rather than leaving you guessing or blaming the leaf. A bitter, harsh, drying cup is almost always too hot or too long for that type, so with a delicate tea lower the temperature first and the time second, and with a sturdy one cut the time. A thin, watery, hollow cup is almost always too little leaf, not too short a steep, so add leaf rather than extending the brew. A flat, dull cup that does not improve on a second steep is usually stale or poorly stored tea, which the pot cannot fix. Every common complaint traces back to one of the three controls, which is also what makes an unfamiliar tea painless: place it on the spectrum from delicate to sturdy, set the three dials, taste, and adjust one dial at a time, see how to make tea. If a cup ever disappoints, do not change the tea first, change one dial and taste again, because nine times in ten the leaf was fine and the temperature, time or dose was not.

What to buy

Stock a tea worth brewing well: a sturdy black tea or a fresh green tea, or browse the wider loose leaf range. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (beverage)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · One pot brewed to the right time and temperature beats five bags dunked in a hurry.

Brewing reading

- How to make tea properly
- How to brew green tea
- How to brew oolong tea
- Ideal water temperatures

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly

- Loose leaf vs teabag

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